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Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development

Statement submitted by the United Nations Association of China, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2006/100.

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Statement

Recommendations by the United Nations Non-Governmental Organization Informal Regional Network/Asia-Pacific to the High-level segment of the Economic and Social Council (17 March 2006 — Beijing, China)

The United Nations Non-Governmental Organization Informal Regional Network/Asia-Pacific was launched jointly by the China NGO Network for International Exchanges (CNIE) and the NGO Section of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs on March 17, 2006 in Beijing. The event has been attended by more than 40 people from 34 NGOs, among whom are Chief of the NGO Section of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, representatives from the member organizations of CNIE and organizations who are applying for CNIE membership along with representatives from Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development of the Philippines, Viet Nam Union of Friendship Organizations, Peace Boat of Japan, All India Women's Education Fund Association, Women Political School of Pakistan and National Council of Women of Thailand.

At the United Nations Millennium Summit held in September 2000, heads of states and governments from 189 member states gathered together and reviewed the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and unanimously adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration, setting the target of realizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. The Millennium Declaration requires all countries, rich or poor, to go all out in eradicating poverty, promoting health, dignity and equality of the human being, and in achieving peace, democracy and sustainable development of the environment. Those goals not only embody people's aspirations for a better life but also reflect the common conviction of the people: development is a vital condition for world peace, social stability, economic prosperity and progress of the humanity. At the United Nations Summit Meeting held in September 2005, heads of states and governments again gathered together to review the fulfillment of the MDGs and reiterated their solemn commitments to the MDGs. The theme of the High-level Segment of ECOSOC to be held in July 2006 is also related to the MDGs: *Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development.*

1. Today, we, representatives from 34 NGOs in Asia along with the Chief of the United Nations NGO Section, Department of Economic and Social Affairs held network workshop on "promoting the implementation of the MDGs, and enhancing interactions and cooperation between NGOs and the United Nations" whereby we exchanged experience and explored solutions concerning how to promote sustainable development through job creation, and boost parallel economic and social development through poverty reduction. Hereby, we made the following recommendations to the High-level segment. Taking the principle of putting people in the first place as the guide, efforts should be made to place employment expansion at a more prominent position, and adopt a proactive, fair and just employment policy; in periods of economic restructuring or transformation, it is essential to adhere to the principle of taking job creation as the priority so as to make it possible for a virtuous circle of economic growth and sound employment situation.

2. Governments should provide for employment assistance, technical and skill training, unemployment insurance and minimum subsistence allowance, and provide laid-off workers with more job opportunities by taking measures like granting micro-credits, offering free training courses and exempting their taxes and fees, etc. Policy support should be given to NGOs so that they can play a full role in promoting employment.

3. It is imperative to place education at a priority position in the development strategy by strengthening compulsory education in the rural areas and developing vocational education and training. It is necessary to improve job placement and guidance services providing employment services for disadvantaged groups in particular. It is also important to solve employment difficulties for urban and rural surplus labour forces so as to achieve rational distribution of labour resources.

4. It is vital to eliminate gender discrimination in employment by creating favourable social conditions for female employment and encouraging women to play an active role in social and economic development so as to achieve self progress and development. Efforts should be made to establish an employment mechanism that can meet the needs of youth and expand areas for youth employment. The legitimate rights and interests of the workers should be protected and safe and healthy working conditions should be provided to them. The social security system should be improved to cover unemployment, illness, pension and industrial injury insurance.

5. Attention should be paid to achieve a coordinated development of the urban and rural areas, paying due attention to questions concerning agriculture, the rural areas and the farmers. Efforts should be made to carry out agrarian reform, develop science and technology-driven agriculture, make full use of indigenous knowledge system and build a new countryside in the light of the national conditions of various countries with the purpose of enhancing rural economy and offering a way out for employment of the local redundant labour force.

6. It is necessary to create a rational and win-win international fair trade environment. Regional trade and economic cooperation should be carried out in a spirit of being good friends and partners with neighbouring countries. Trade and economic problems should be properly dealt with on the basis of equality, flexibility and mutual benefit accommodating each other. Meanwhile, the capacity of the working people to cope with challenges brought about by economic globalization should be further built up through exchanges and cooperation.

7. Poverty is a grave challenge confronting the human being in the 21st century, and poverty eradication has always been the foundation for the human being to realize their goals of seeking social justice, fairness and equality. Therefore, governments should make proactive policy decisions for poverty eradication. Governments and international community should carry out wide-ranging activities for poverty reduction, and strive for attainment of the MDGs before the deadline through such means as fiscal support, business investment, social donation, public involvement and international cooperation.

8. It is essential to uphold a scientific approach of development to promote a balanced economic, social and cultural development. Efforts should also be stepped up to build a resource conserving and environmental friendly society.

9. Governments should increase investment in the public service sector so that all the people can share the fruits of economic growth. Proactive and effective measures should be taken to gradually narrow the income disparity among social members, improving the minimum living standard system for urban residents and enhance the consumption level of the rural population and the urban low income residents.

10. The traditional way of poverty relief should be changed to one that facilitates poverty reduction by means of development. In addition to solving the food security of the poor population, which is the starting point of poverty alleviation, it is also essential to increase investment in their human resources development, and provide conditions to help them gain access to resources including land, knowledge and knowledge application so that they can enhance their self-development capability and shake off poverty through their own efforts in the real sense.

11. The international community should step up cooperation in such fields as development-oriented poverty alleviation, the beefing up of the public health system, especially in the prevention of HIV/AIDS, avian influenza and other major diseases, the protection of ecological resources and sustainable development of environment, as well as in human resources development. The developed countries should earnestly fulfill their international obligations of providing ODA with no less than 0.7% of the donor country's GDP and debt relief and cancellation of the debt of the developing countries.

12. The key role of the United Nations in the field of development should be further strengthened. It is imperative to fully galvanize the political will of relevant parties at the inter-governmental coordinating segments and urge them to turn their commitments into action for the realization of our goals of poverty

eradication and common development throughout the world. The United Nations should utilize the existing mechanisms to perform a just, open and rational assessment of the fulfillment progress of the MDGs especially the implementation of international cooperation and the fulfillment of ODA pledges.

The NGOs that have participated in this meeting would like to use their respective unique strengths in their own specialized fields so as to contribute to the attainment of the MDGs in the Asia-Pacific region and the world at large. We look forward to more opportunities of dialogues and cooperation between NGOs in the Asia-Pacific region and United Nations Member States as well as the institutions of the United Nations. It is our sincere hope that more NGO representatives from developing countries, especially those from the Asia-Pacific region, will have opportunities to address the relevant topics at the high-level segment, which will be held in July this year, so that we can better communicate and exchange views with the United Nations, the governments of various countries and the NGOs from other parts of the world and share our experience with the international community.

Participating non-governmental organizations:

All China Environment Federation
All China Women's Federation
All China Youth Federation
All India Women's Education Fund Association
Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development of the Philippines
China Arms Control and Disarmament Association
China Association for NGO Cooperation
China Association for Preservation and Development of Tibetan Culture
China Association for Science and Technology
China Association of Employment Promotion
China Association of Women Entrepreneurs
China Care and Compassion Society
China Disabled Person's Federation
China Economic and Social Council
China Education Association for International Exchange
China Environmental Protection Foundation
China Family Planning Association
China Green Foundation
China Law Society
China NGO Network for International Exchanges
China Society for Human Rights Studies
China Society for Promotion of the Guangcai Programme
Chinese Association for International Understanding
Chinese Medical Association
Chinese People's Association for Peace and Disarmament
Chinese People's Association for the Friendship with Foreign Countries
Chinese Society for Sustainable Development
National Association of Vocational Education of China
National Council of Women of Thailand
Peace Boat
Red Cross Society of China
United Nations Association of China
Viet Nam Union of Friendship Organizations
Women Political School of Pakistan